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Update on Situation in Suriname

The atmosphere in Paramaribo currently is calm; however, there still exists underlying tension and expectation that more regime-inspired violence will occur. Handbills, which circulated widely last weekend, called for passive resistance to the Bouterse regime. Distributed by the previously unknown "Suriname Liberation Movement," the leaflets asked the Surinamese people to stay at home, refrain from buying Paramaribo's state-controlled newspaper, close shops and offices, and maintain a 15-day supply of essential goods at home. Another handbill showed Army Commander Bouterse's photo superimposed over a "Wanted Dead or Alive" poster. The Military Authority has responded to these leaflets by putting the troops on alert status, according to unconfirmed reports.

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Surinamers may be too fearful of the military's reaction to respond to the calls for passive resistance. We do not expect any large-scale violence over the near term. As individual Surinamers become more frustrated with the regime, however, there may be isolated incidents of attacks on military personnel or government facilities.

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Over the weekend [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the navy was on the verge of a mutiny.

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Information currently available indicates that the naval forces do not possess sufficient firepower or operable equipment to attempt a coup against Bouterse. Their only functioning patrol boat reportedly is under the control of a zealous member of the Group of 16. They could attempt an assassination, but we do not know if any naval personnel beyond trusted Bouterse loyalists have access to the Army Commander. The navy's chances for success would be enhanced greatly if they could enlist the support of the key commando company that guards Bouterse's command center in Ft. Zeelandia. [REDACTED]

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Foreign Minister Naarendorp currently is attempting to cultivate Latin American support for Suriname. He spoke to the Latin American Group at the United Nations on 1 February and to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States last week. He is scheduled to be in Panama today, although we have received no confirmation of his arrival. Stops in Colombia, Brazil, and possibly in Argentina are still scheduled. A representative of the International Red Cross arrived in Paramaribo on Friday--perhaps in response to Naarendorp's offer to receive human rights groups for investigation of the Surinamese situation. [REDACTED]

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We have noted no change in the Cuban presence in Suriname, although the Havana press has become more outspoken in its

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support of the Bouterse regime over the last two weeks.

